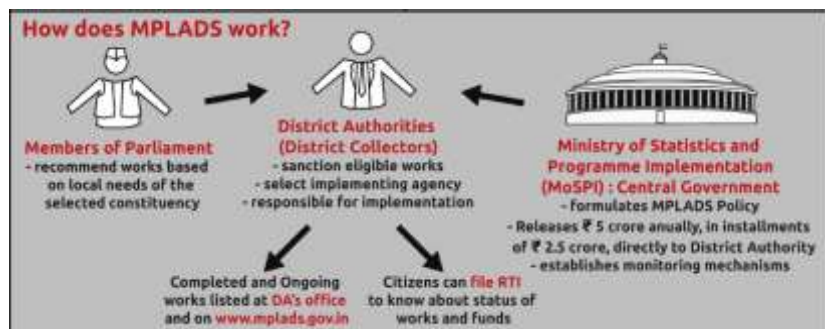


Current Affairs of the Day

Union Cabinet brings back MPLAD Scheme

1. Citing economic recovery, the Union Cabinet restored the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) that was suspended in April 2020 subsuming the funds for the scheme in the consolidated fund of India.



2. The scheme was suspended for two financial years (2020-21 and 2021-22) but the Government announced a partial rollback. The MPs will get ₹2 crores instead of the annually approved ₹5 crores.
3. When the suspension was announced last year, the Government had claimed that ₹8,000 crores that would have otherwise been spent under the scheme will go to the consolidated fund of India and will be used for fighting the pandemic.

MPLADS

Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme

What can our elected MPs do for the development of our constituency?

What is MPLADS?

- MPLADS is a scheme instituted by the Government of India in 1993 as a way for MPs to recommend and oversee development in their constituency.
- Elected Lok Sabha members can recommend work in their respective constituencies; Elected Rajya Sabha members can recommend work in their respective state; Nominated members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha can recommend work anywhere in the country.
- Since 2011-12, each MP allocated ₹ 5 crore per year for implementation of the recommended works. Funds are non-lapsable i.e. unused funds are carried forward to the next year.
- 15% of the funds to be used for area inhabited by Scheduled Castes and 7.5% of the funds to be used for area inhabited by Scheduled Tribes.

| What works can be recommended? | What works can NOT be recommended? |
|---|---|
| <p>Facilities and infrastructure in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking Water • Education and Skill Development • Electricity and non-conventional Energy Resources • Healthcare, Sanitation and Safety • Railways, Roads, Pathways, Bridges • Sports • Agriculture and Irrigation • Self Help Group Development • Urban Development, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offices/Residential buildings for public/private agencies • Works belonging to commercial organisations/private institutions or co-operative institutions • Land acquisition/compensation • Naming assets after individuals • Assets for individual benefits, except those which are part of approved schemes • Places for religious worship • Memorial buildings, etc. |



Issues with MPLADS:

- **Lack of Transparency:** Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and Central Information Commission (CIC) reports^{2,3} indicate poorly maintained records of fund use and asset creation by both MoSPI and various District Authorities.
- **Corruption:** Instances of DAs directly using funds without MPs' recommendations, sanctioning funds to ineligible trusts/societies, MPs selecting implementing agencies, unaccounted and under-utilised funds, etc. have been reported by CAG².
- **MPLADS for Political mileage:** In 15th Lok Sabha term (2009-2014) MPs, irrespective of party ideology, spent majority of the unspent balance and new funds in the last year of the term, using MPLADS as political mileage to be gained during elections⁴.
- **Misuse/Under-use/Wastage of funds:** In 11 states/ UTs ₹ 8.50 crore worth unfruitful expenditure of incurred due to suspended or abandoned works; Unspent balances left by predecessor Rajya Sabha MPs in 10 states not carried forward to the new MPs².

How can MPLADS be improved?

- **Better transparency and monitoring** of fund-spending and sanctioned works
- **Lapsable funds** to put pressure on utilisation, reduce over-utilisation at the end of term and prevent build up of unutilised funds
- More efforts to include **citizen participation** in assessing local needs

With **adequate monitoring** and **sufficient political will**, MPLADS can be an invaluable tool for the development of the country.

NSA meet seeks urgent help for Afghans

1. The Third Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan called for "urgent humanitarian assistance" to the Afghan people.
2. The call was given in the meeting chaired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, who urged close cooperation and consultation among the regional countries over the Afghan scenario.
3. A joint statement titled the 'Delhi Declaration' issued after the meeting called for "collective cooperation" against terrorism and drug trafficking in the region and "expressed concern over the deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and underlined the need to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan".



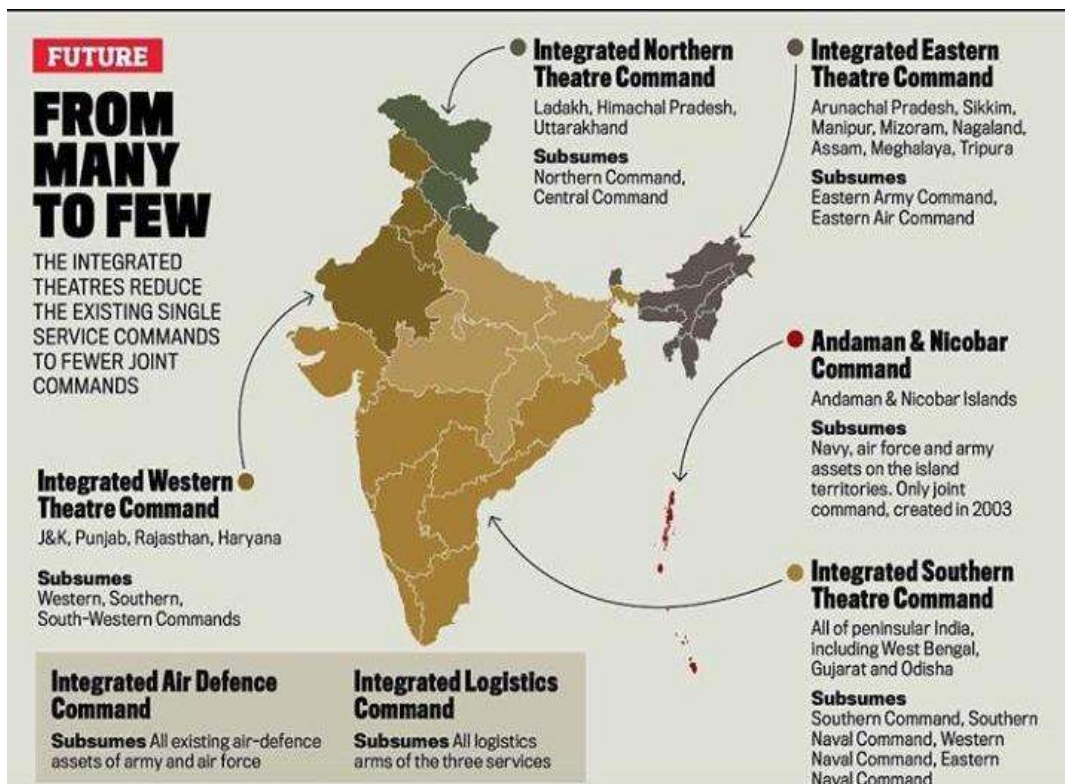
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Armed forces need to be ready for any contingency: Rajnath

1. Referring to the “volatile situation” on the borders, Defence Minister told the IAF brass that the armed forces must be prepared to respond at “short notice for any contingency”.
2. The role of IAF in conflicts is crucial and it needs to harness the capabilities and opportunities offered by AI, Big Data Handling and Machine Learning.
3. On the process of theaterisation of the armed forces, he said enhancing jointness is essential and the structure should be evolved after closely examining options.



Centre approves incentives for sugar cane, cotton, jute farmers

1. The CCEA increased the price of ethanol extracted from sugar cane juice for blending in petrol to ₹63.45 a litre in the coming sugar marketing season starting December.



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- The rate for ethanol extracted from C-heavy molasses has been increased by 97 paise a litre, while that of ethanol extracted from B-heavy molasses is up ₹1.47 as well.
- Ethanol blending with petrol is expected to reach 10% next year and 20% by 2025. Oil marketing companies buy ethanol from sugar mills and distilleries at the rate set by the Government.
- By reducing the sugar surplus and increasing mills' liquidity, the rate hike is expected to reduce their pending arrears in payment to sugar cane farmers.
- The ethanol blending programme also reduced the dependence on crude oil imports.



- Cabinet approves higher ethanol price derived from different sugarcane based raw materials for sugar season 2020-21
- Price of ethanol from C heavy molasses increased from ₹45.69 to ₹46.66 per litre
- Price of ethanol from B heavy molasses increased from ₹57.61 to ₹59.08 per litre
- Price of ethanol from sugarcane juice, sugar/sugar syrup increased from ₹62.65 to ₹63.45 per litre
- GST and transportation charges also payable
- Oil PSEs to have freedom to decide pricing for 2G ethanol



Benefits

- Price stability and remunerative prices for ethanol suppliers
- Facilitating setting up advanced biofuel refineries in the country
- Reducing the pending arrears of Cane farmers
- Reducing dependency on crude oil imports
- Helping in savings in foreign exchange
- Benefiting the environment



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Price support to CCI

1. The CCEA also approved committed price support of ₹17,408.85 crores to the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) as reimbursement for its losses in procuring crops from farmers at minimum support prices (MSP) over the past seven years.
2. The CCI is mandated to procure all Fair Average Quality grade cotton from farmers without any quantitative ceiling, as and when prices follow below the MSP rates set by the Centre, in a bid to protect farmers from distress sales.

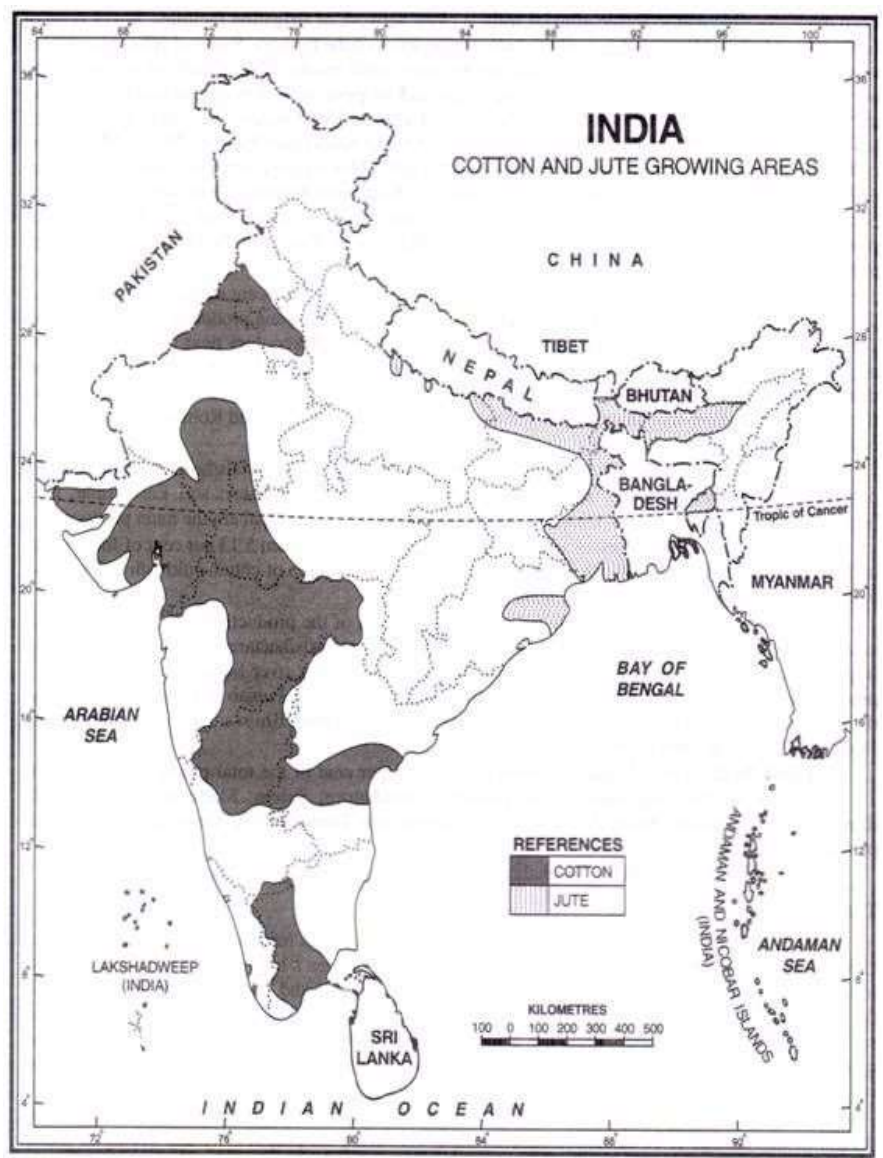


FIG. 24.3. India : Fibre Crops (Cotton & Jute)

3. Over the last two seasons during the pandemic, the CCI procured a third of the country's cotton production, paying 40 lakh farmers more than ₹55,000 crores.



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Jute in packaging

1. The CCEA approved reservation norms for the mandatory use of jute in packaging this year, stipulating that 100% of foodgrains and 20% of sugar must compulsorily be packed in jute bags. Such reservation consumed two-thirds of the total raw jute production last year.

2. As the Centre itself purchases jute sacking bags worth approximately ₹8,000 crores a year to pack grains, it also ensures a guaranteed market for the produce of 40 lakh jute farmers, mostly in eastern India, and supports 3.7 lakh jute mill workers, largely in West Bengal.



India, U.S. monitoring defence trade projects

1. As part of efforts for co-production and co-development of defence equipment under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), India and the U.S. agreed on a revised Statement of Intent (SOI) to strengthen the dialogue by





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“pursuing detailed planning and making measurable progress” on several specific projects.

2. The aim of the group was to bring sustained leadership focus to the bilateral defence trade relationship and create opportunities for co-production and co-development of defence equipment, the statement noted.

Strategic Trade Authority Tier 1 (STA-1)

- ◆ In August 2018, U.S. had granted the designation of Strategic Trade Authority Tier 1 (STA-1) to India.
- ◆ This provided India with **greater supply-chain efficiency** by allowing US companies to export a **greater range of dual-use and high-technology items** to India under streamlined processes.
- ◆ This authorisation is the **equivalent of NATO** allying with Japan, South Korea and Australia.

3. Four Joint Working Groups focused on land, naval, air and aircraft carrier technologies had been established under the DTTI to promote mutually agreed projects.

4. This forum offers an opportunity for Indian and U.S. industries to be directly involved in DTTI and facilitates dialogue between government and industry on issues that impact industrial collaboration.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| MCQs | <p>Q1. Ethanol can be produced from</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. C Heavy Molasses 2. B Heavy Molasses 3. Sugar Syrup <p>Select the correct answer from the codes given below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 and 2 only b. 2 and 3 only c. 1 and 3 only d. 1, 2 and 3 |
| MAINS DAWP | <p>Q1. Discuss the need for joint theatre commands in Indian armed forces given the emerging continental and marine challenges.</p> |